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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents 12 examples of innovative initiatives to skill shortages nationwide. The description of each one provides this information: the challenge, partners, the story, and contacts with addresses and telephone numbers. The initiatives are Communications Workers of America and Cisco Systems: Military to Work Project; Knowbility and Powershift Group: Accessibility Internet Rally; Bell Atlantic Corporation and Northeast Career Planning: Train for 2000; Turner Jobs Corps Center and Albany State University: EXPECTS SUCCESS; Women Unlimited and Maine Department of Transportation: Connecting Women to Jobs in Construction; Home Builders Institute, National Association of Home Builders Women's Council, and Pozzi Window Co.: Cornerstone Project; ELTECH Systems Corporation: Cross-Training Full-Time Employees To Create a More Flexible Workforce; International Association of Machinists and the Boeing Co.: Quality through Training Program; City of Baltimore, Maryland and Civic Works: Community Improvement Teams; WomenVenture, Minnesota Teamsters Service Bureau, and Auto Dealerships: Increasing Women's Representation in Automobile Service Jobs; UPS, State of Kentucky, University of Louisville, Jefferson Technical College, and Jefferson Community College: Metropolitan College Program; and Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute and Home Care Associates of Philadelphia: Training and Retention Program. (YLB)

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BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE NEW ECONOMY

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

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U.S. Department of Labor
Alexis M. Herman, Secretary

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NATIONAL SKILLS SUMMIT

BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE NEW ECONOMY

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

NATIONAL SKILLS SUMMIT

A Skills Shortage, Not a Worker Shortage

Employers are shouting from the economic hilltops of America. They call from high-tech suites in Silicon Valley, from manufacturing hubs in the Midwest, and from the concrete canyons of Wall Street: We need workers! We need workers!

I hear them and I share their concerns. But we do not have a worker shortage in America. We have a skills shortage. Even at our lowest unemployment in 30 years, there are six million Americans who are unemployed and looking for work. Four million more have stopped looking but want to work. Another three million are working part-time but want a full-time job. That's 13 million people.

The time has come to reach out to these untapped pools of workers – in our cities and rural areas, on our Native American reservations, or coming out of our high schools and community colleges – and give them the skills to succeed.

We are testing innovative solutions to skill shortages all around this country. The examples that follow in this booklet illustrate what we can accomplish. I hope they will inspire you, as they have me.

Building on these examples is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. It's smart, because without a supply of skilled workers our economic boom could run out of gas. And it is morally right to invest in our workers because America's core values demand equal opportunity and widely-shared prosperity.

Thank you for joining me at this first ever National Skills Summit. I look forward to working with you to turn America's skills shortage into a skills abundance.

Alexis M. Herman
U.S. Secretary of Labor

U.S. Department of Labor
Alexis M. Herman, Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20210

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

Communications Workers of America and Cisco Systems: Military to Work Project

The Challenge

The technology and telecommunications industries' overwhelming demand for qualified workers.

Partners

Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO, the largest telecommunications union in North America, representing more than 630,000 workers in the U.S. and Canada.

Cisco Systems, a giant in the telecommunications industry, specializing in interactive software and information services.

The Story

A week after sending her resume to the Communications Workers of America, Navy veteran Maria Daloia had a terrific job in the high-tech industry. She is one of the many veterans taking advantage of the "Military to Work" project, which links experienced veterans with employers or helps them get the training they need to land good jobs.

Cisco Systems and CWA use the Internet to test, evaluate, and refer interested military veterans to telecommunications companies or help them enter training programs to learn high-tech skills. Now telecommunications companies such as AT&T, Lucent Technologies, US West, and numerous smaller cable, security, and alarm companies are tapping into this readily available pool of experienced workers.

CWA reports that more than 150 veterans have been placed in jobs and most have starting salaries of about $14 per hour. At the end of four years, many veterans will be making the top craft rate of about $56,000 per year.

Secretary Herman is especially pleased that veterans are being rewarded for their service by having the opportunity to become new workers in the new economy. "Our veterans are some of the best workers a company could want and they deserve the best opportunities," the secretary said.

This year, Stanly Community College in North Carolina joined the project to provide applicants with long-distance learning in certified skill programs. Cisco is providing additional lab equipment to meet the growing demand from veterans. Fourteen labs will be installed in CWA facilities in Florida, New York, New Jersey, Washington, Ohio, North Carolina, Texas, and the Midwest.

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

Knowbility and Powershift Group: Accessibility Internet Rally (A.I.R. Austin)

The Challenge

Make the Internet more accessible to people with disabilities and introduce high-tech companies to the potential of employees with disabilities.

Partners

Knowbility, a national non-profit organization providing educational and employment opportunities in information technology to people with disabilities.

Powershift Group, a technology venture developer building sustainable companies by providing management involvement and expertise, financing, and a global network of resources that increase the opportunity for success.

The Story

Josh and Amanda, 18-year-old blind students, worked together as an Internet research team and were looking for experience in Austin's high-tech industry. After attending the Accessibility Internet Rally -- now dubbed "A.I.R. Austin" -- they ended up with internships at a Powershift Group affiliate. In fact, Powershift executives were so impressed by what they saw at A.I.R. Austin they plan to hire more young people with disabilities this summer.

Powershift Group, Austin-based high-tech companies, and Knowbility staged the first Accessibility Internet Rally two years ago so high-tech companies could learn about making the Internet accessible to people with disabilities and widen their employee pool to include people with disabilities. The rally gave Web designers and local high-tech firms a half-day of training on Internet accessibility techniques. On the following day, teams of company personnel and non-profit staff and volunteers competed to design accessible Web sites. Last year they created 22 Web sites in one day. The event costs about $30,000 and includes corporate sponsors Mitsubishi, Electric America Foundation, IBM, Applied Materials, and Infotec.

"As co-chair of the President's Task Force on the Employment of Adults with Disabilities, I understand how important technology is to people with disabilities," Secretary Herman said. "Technology not only makes their lives better, it offers tremendous opportunities for them to succeed in the workplace. Adults with disabilities are a wonderful source for closing the skills gap."

Knowbility is planning similar accessibility rallies in Dallas and Denver.

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

Bell Atlantic Corporation and Northeast Career Planning: Train for 2000

The Challenge

The information technology industry's need for high-skilled workers.

Partners

Bell Atlantic Corporation, a leading-edge telecommunications company providing telephone, cellular and Internet services to customers from Maine to Virginia.

Northeast Career Planning, a not-for-profit New York agency that helps more than 1,500 people with disabilities join the workforce annually.

The Story

In February 1999, Northeast Career Planning asked Bell Atlantic to open its multi-million-dollar training centers to people with disabilities. Bell Atlantic accepted the challenge.

A team made up of Bell Atlantic employees, NCP employees, community advocates, and independent contractors designed a unique program that allowed persons with disabilities to use Bell Atlantic's Multi-Media Learning Center in Albany side-by-side with Bell Atlantic employees. The pilot program trained 100 people in various computer software applications -- and 90 of them went on to increased wages or upgrades in their current positions. Bell Atlantic absorbed the $75 per-student per-day expense for the pilot program of "Train for 2000". The pilot in Albany proved so successful that "Train for 2000" will be extended to the Bell Atlantic location in Long Island.

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

Turner Jobs Corps Center and Albany State University: EXPECTS SUCCESS

The Challenge

The technology industry's overwhelming need for skilled workers.

Partners

Turner Job Corps Center, one of the largest Job Corps Center in the United States, providing employment, vocational, academic, and social skills training to disadvantaged youth ages 16 to 24.

Albany State University, a university in Albany, Georgia, offering undergraduate and graduate degree programs and community outreach.

The Story

Albany State University developed the EXPECTS SUCCESS program to help young students and unemployed youth to gain long-term employment, higher entry-level wages, and life skills training. Each year the program serves 300 youth and young adults between the ages of 14 and 21. In addition to middle and high school students, this innovative program serves young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 from Turner Job Corps in an on-campus computer technology laboratory. The Georgia Department of Labor is funding the three-year pilot program.

The five-week Microsoft Office Certificate training program is offered in four sessions throughout the year. To date the program has trained two classes for a total of 30 Turner Job Corps graduates. An additional 30 students are currently enrolled in the third session. Two corporations – Procter & Gamble and Bank of America – have streamlined their application process to graduates. After graduation, students are assigned to work-based learning sites for ongoing training and development and are then eligible for possible employment at the assigned sites.

The EXPECTS SUCCESS program offers additional benefits: 7.5 Continuing Education Units (CEUs), eligibility for scholarships to continue their education, and a streamlined admissions process into ASU.

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

Women Unlimited and the Maine Department of Transportation: Connecting Women to Jobs in Construction

The Challenge

The Maine construction industry's urgent need for skilled workers.

Partners

Women Unlimited, a non-profit trade and technical training organization that prepares women living in Maine for non-traditional jobs.

Maine Department of Transportation

The Story

After years of adversity, Rose Higgins-Brown, former hairdresser and mother of two, signed up for Women Unlimited's training program at the Kennebec Valley Technical College. Rose was so successful that even before she completed the program, which included surveying, fluid-power technology, and blueprint reading, the Maine Department of Transportation hired her. About 18 months later, a private company recruited Rose and later sponsored additional training at the Asphalt Institute at Auburn University in Alabama. Rose now owns Western Maine Paving Company.

Construction companies in Maine are among the employers shouting from the hilltops for new workers. Women Unlimited knows that women can fill those jobs. The organization runs programs to prepare women for nontraditional jobs, including truck driving, carpentry, basic construction, auto technology, drafting and design, electrical wiring, masonry, materials testing, and many others. This program includes entry-level and advanced training. Women Unlimited formed a partnership with the Maine Department of Transportation to recruit, train, and place women for highway, bridge, or mass transit construction jobs.

The fourteen-week program includes certified hands-on skill training, a ropes course, weekly job shadowing, and job readiness training. The Women Unlimited Job Bank connects graduates to more than 80 employers.

Last year, 96 percent of graduates – a total of 122 – went on to trade or technical employment, with an average starting wage of $8.70 per hour. (The average starting wage in private industry was $9.50 per hour.)

Karen Dresser is another of Women Unlimited's success stories. Karen joined the Women Unlimited training program at Eastern Maine Technical College and was quickly hired at the Maine Department of Transportation as a temporary engineering aide I, working in materials testing. She was promoted recently to engineering aide II and accepted as a permanent employee. Thanks to Women Unlimited she enjoys a feeling of independence and feels that she is a better role model for her two girls. Karen has also been hired by Women Unlimited on two occasions to instruct other women in materials testing.

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

Home Builders Institute, National Association of Home Builders Women's Council, and Pozzi Window Co.: Cornerstone Project

The Challenge

The intense demand for skilled workers in the booming home building industry.

Partners

Home Builders Institute, the nation's leading source for education and training programs serving the home building industry, training skilled workers in residential construction.

National Association of Home Builders Women's Council, a resource for women in residential construction, helping women develop careers in building.

Pozzi Windows/JELD-WEN, Inc., is a division of JELD-WEN, a leading manufacturer of doors, windows, and specialty millwork, located in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

The Story

Women make up only 10 percent of construction industry employees – and are an untapped pool of potential workers. After working on a two-year program, funded by a Labor Department grant of $254,000, to increase opportunities for women in the building industry, the Home Builders Institute collaborated with Pozzi to form an innovative mentoring program, called "Cornerstone."

By pairing experienced women in the industry with protegees, the partners hope to increase recruitment of women into the building industry to help meet the need for workers. Cornerstone is funded by $300,000 in corporate donations. The program has doubled since it started in 1998 and continues to expand, with 40 new mentoring pairs matched already in 2000.

Cornerstone partners produced several guides, a recruiting video and manual, a brochure, and a newsletter to help businesses establish mentoring programs.

As a former director of the Women's Bureau, Secretary Herman is especially interested in seeing women enter non-traditional occupations. "This mentoring program is about women helping women succeed, and in fields that many may never have thought possible," she said. "Non-traditional jobs – and especially those in the building trades – pay a lot more and allow women to be successful and self-sufficient."

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

ELTECH Systems Corporation: Cross-Training Full-Time Employees to Create a More Flexible Workforce

The Challenge

ELTECH's need for a stable workforce with lower employee turnover, increased productivity, and less need for temporary workers.

Partners

ELTECH Systems Corporation, a leader in the manufacturing and marketing of electrochemistry technology and related products.

The Story

ELTECH's challenge was to build its workforce from within, something Secretary Herman has encouraged employers that rely on part-time or temporary workers to do. ELTECH thought it had a labor shortage, but when management officials decided to solve the problem internally they learned that they could have a stable, more flexible workforce by using current workers in ways that benefitted the company and the workers.

By cross-training its full-time employees, hiring more full-time workers, training supervisors, and developing a team-based work environment, ELTECH eliminated the need for a large temporary workforce, frequent training, and high turnover.

The company upgraded its training and developed more efficient work processes. It now has a stable workforce.

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

International Association of Machinists and the Boeing Co.: Quality Through Training Program (QTTP)

The Challenge

A rapidly changing workplace that can increase the number of dislocated workers.

Partners

International Association of Machinists (IAM), AFL-CIO, machinists union representing workers in 200 basic industries.

Boeing Company, the largest aerospace company in the world, manufacturing commercial jetliners and military aircraft, and the largest NASA contractor

The Story

After eight years working at Boeing, worker Vicki Kramer was afraid she would have a hard time finding a new job. Then she heard about the "Quality Through Training Program" and signed up for computer, blueprint reading, and precision measurement classes. Now she's working on a computer as an expeditor at Boeing's Harbor Pointe facility. She says that QTTP gave her "self-esteem and self-confidence to learn something new." Vicki is continuing her education in psychology with tuition assistance through QTTP.

QTTP is part of the collective bargaining agreement between Boeing and IAM to provide IAM-represented workers education assistance, career counseling, and personal development. The program helps IAM-represented employees at seven Boeing sites upgrade their skills to meet new demands in the workplace and helps them cope with workplace changes. Workers can get professional career counseling and skills assessment to help them meet their goals. QTTP covers tuition at local community and technical schools.

Boeing funds the program at $14 million a year. Increased layoffs in recent years created greater demand for these re-training and employment services. QTTP continues to evolve and grow, by linking with other companies and continually updating its services. An excellent example of labor-management cooperation, QTTP helps hundreds of workers keep pace in a rapidly changing workplace.

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

City of Baltimore, Maryland and Civic Works: Community Improvement Teams

The Challenge

To prepare today's young people for the workforce of tomorrow.

Partners

Civic Works, a City of Baltimore program helping young people develop work skills through community service.

Baltimore Department of Housing and Community Development
Baltimore Department of Recreation and Parks
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Police Athletic Leagues
Public Schools

The Story

In the fall of 1997, James Harrison went to Civic Works looking for a stable job and an opportunity to earn his GED. He earned the GED, became a crew leader, was promoted to assistant supervisor on the public works team, and went to night classes at Baltimore City Community College. He is working towards his associate's degree in mental health and plans to get a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Civic Works offers training to young people between the ages of 17 and 25. In 1998, 140 young men and women participated. About half were high school graduates or dropouts and half had some experience in college. The program recruits through high school and college career fairs, community organizations, and service fairs.

Civic Works organized community improvement teams to turn vacant lots into parks and gardens, provide landscaping and other services to public housing developments, build trails in Baltimore County, and provide physical assistance to community residents when a storm, fire, or other disaster strikes. Another team rehabilitates houses that are then sold or rented to low- and moderate-income families. Education and mentoring teams, which recruit youth with at least two semesters of college, provide tutors to work with children and teens after school at Police Athletic Centers.

Young people make visible and valuable contributions to the community, not only building work skills but also building their self-esteem, citizenship, and sense of connection to others.

"One of the features I like best about Civic Works is that it introduces young people to the values of public service," Secretary Herman said. "Baltimore is shaping future community leaders as well as workers."

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

WomenVenture, Minnesota Teamsters Service Bureau and Auto Dealerships: Increasing Women's Representation in Automobile Service Jobs

The Challenge

The high demand for skilled workers in auto mechanics and auto service jobs.

Partners

WomenVenture, a Twin Cities non-profit organization that helps women move toward economic self-sufficiency.

Minnesota Teamsters Service Bureau, provides training and workplace transition services for union members, serving thousands of workers.

The Story

WomenVenture and the Teamster Service Bureau are working with the Greater Metropolitan Automobile Dealers Association to establish apprenticeships for women. Women are under-represented in automobile and truck service, parts, and body repair jobs.

WomenVenture and the Minnesota Teamsters Service Bureau will provide technical assistance with personnel policies, recruitment, and apprenticeship policies, and will help identify skilled women who are available to work in the industry. Their goals are to get at least five auto dealerships to create apprenticeships and to break down barriers to women working in the auto repair industry.

This project is funded by a U.S. Department of Labor Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) grant of $78,000.

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

UPS, State of Kentucky, University of Louisville, Jefferson Technical College, and Jefferson Community College: Metropolitan College Program

The Challenge

UPS's demand for workers in order to expand its Worldwide Air Hub in Louisville.

Partners

UPS, the world's largest package distribution company, transporting more than three billion parcels and documents annually.

State of Kentucky
University of Louisville
Jefferson Technical College
Jefferson Community College

The Story

UPS needed to expand its Worldwide Air Hub in Louisville but couldn't find enough workers. So the company created a new workforce by offering college students part-time jobs and a free education. Created in 1998, the "Metropolitan College Program" now has 1,200 students enrolled in the University of Louisville, Jefferson Technical College, and Jefferson Community College. That's also 1,200 part-time workers for UPS.

The students get a free education at any of the three schools, plus a housing subsidy, along with the job, which includes health benefits and a 401(k) retirement plan. They also have mentors. The student-workers may get their degrees in any subject, are not required to work for UPS when they graduate, and will get help finding jobs.

The program is funded with a $2 million grant from the state of Kentucky, $625,000 from the city of Louisville and Jefferson County; and $100,000 from Greater Louisville, Inc. UPS pays about $4 million in tuition fees, contributed $1.1 million in classroom facilities, and $1.5 million in equipment.

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INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute and Home Care Associates of Philadelphia: Training and Retention Program

The Challenge

The acute shortage of skilled healthcare paraprofessionals - home health aides, certified nursing assistants, and personal attendants.

Partners

Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute, a non-profit organization in New York, which develops worker-owned cooperatives that offer training and retention programs for healthcare paraprofessionals.

Home Care Associates of Philadelphia, a worker-owned home health care agency providing paraprofessional job training and employing 70 home health aides serving more than 200 clients monthly.

The Story

Yvette Beatty has gone from welfare to a seat on the board of directors at Home Care Associates. She has been with HCA for six years, having first trained with them as a home health aide. She is highly valued by her clients as well as her supervisors. Yvette was recently elected by her sister worker-owners to HCA's Board of Directors. She and other HCA employees hold the majority of seats on the Board, which makes all the business decisions for the company.

The shortage of home health aides, certified nursing assistants, and personal care attendants is so severe that agencies too often must turn patients away. Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute and Home Care Associates developed a four-week training program to increase the number of skilled workers and also created better jobs for them, hoping to reduce turnover, which runs 40 to 60 percent for the industry.

HCA, unlike most agencies, offers its employees full-time work, full benefits, opportunities for advancement, and the opportunity to serve on the company's board of directors. HCA also provides transportation -- a problem for many low-income workers. HCA has ten cars, which aides can use to get to and from work. Foundations fund the $3,100 per person cost of training the aides.

"You can't get on the road to success unless you can first get on the road," Secretary Herman said. "I commend Home Care Associates for including transportation as part of their program."

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